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LETTER DATED 6 MARCH 1995 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In addition to my letter of 3 March 1995 and on instructions from my Government, I should like to transmit to you herewith the reaction of the Government of Burundi to the contents of the report concerning the Security Council mission to Bujumbura on 10 and 11 February 1995 (S/1995/163).

1. The Government wishes first of all to thank the Security Council, which, since the outbreak of the crisis of October 1993, has been taking critical steps and diplomatic good offices initiatives in order that Burundi may regain its peace, security and stability.

2. The Security Council's recent mission to Bujumbura on 10 and 11 February 1995 took place at a moment of institutional crisis. Since then, the situation has developed in a positive direction.

3. The political situation is not "potentially explosive", as the report states. The tension observed during the mission's stay in Burundi was linked to the opposition's demand for the ousting of Mr. Anatole Kanyenkiko, the Prime Minister at the time. Today, a new Prime Minister and a new Government have just been appointed by consensus, as provided for in the Convention of government.

4. There are, nevertheless, some problems of insecurity in certain parts of the country. Such is the case of the armed bands that are attacking population groups on hills or in displaced person camps, or which attack military positions. There are also acts of criminality in both rural and urban areas, since the civilian population has illegally acquired firearms. It should be pointed out that any malevolent action is easily viewed from the political-ethnic angle and usually involves reprisals.

The disarmament of the armed population groups also provoked confrontations between the forces of law and order and the groups in possession of firearms. However, the international community should not promote a war scare in Burundi.

5. It is erroneous to state that the security forces "constitute an independent power centre" and that "their support of the coalition Government cannot be taken for granted" (para. 17).

The security forces obey the policy laid down by the Government. Their task is to ensure the security of citizens and of the established institutions. If, after the crisis, they had been derelict in their duty, Burundi would have sunk into unspeakable chaos. Nevertheless, policemen, gendarmes or military men are men like any others; some may commit excesses. In proven cases, the culprits were subject to the military regulations. For example, certain individuals presumed responsible for the attempted coup d'état of October 1993 have been arrested and await trial.

6. The Government of Burundi has never imposed restrictions on the movement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) military observer group. On the contrary, collaboration between the mission and the political authorities, on the one hand, and with the forces of law and order, on the other hand, is regularly commended by the Burundi authorities and the Secretary-General of OAU. The Government of Burundi is also astonished to read in the report that the OAU military observers suffered restrictions on their movement imposed by the Burundian security forces.

7. With regard to augmentation of the number of these observers, the appropriateness of such a step should be determined by the Government of Burundi itself, which has hitherto greatly appreciated the role of this mission in the field. One such determination has been made, and in accordance with the provisions of the Convention of government (it is the National Security Council that debates such a question, under article 16 of the Convention), the Government will then be able to officially put its request to the Secretary-General of OAU.

8. With regard to the International Commission of Judicial Inquiry, the President of the Republic has already addressed a request on the subject to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

9. The recommendation as worded in paragraph 22 of the report speaks of augmenting the United Nations presence in Burundi. If it is a question of strengthening the office of the special representative of the Secretary-General, that presents no problem to the Government of Burundi. However, if it is a question of assisting this Government in the three missions listed in the same paragraph, Burundi makes the following reservations:

(a) Building an impartial judicial system: in Burundi we need rather to support the existing judicial system, which lacks modern working methods for carrying out its mission successfully. The Government has already addressed a request in that regard to certain outside partners, and the response is positive. The United Nations should therefore fall in with the other partners in this matter;

(b) Civilian police training: here the President of the Republic has ordered the creation of a specialized anti-terrorism squad to combat terrorism in the urban centres and a specialized disarmament squad. The Government is in

the process of implementing this measure and external partners have agreed to provide these two specialized units with adequate means to carry out their work. The establishment of a civilian police force is therefore unnecessary. It would create greater confusion since Burundi is already experiencing difficulties in coordinating the activities of the various existing police forces, namely: the Public Security Police, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Frontier Police (which also deals with foreigners), the National Intelligence Department and the Gendarmerie;

(c) Establishment of an effective administrative presence in the provinces: here, too, the Government has already begun to assign to the territorial administration officials who provide reassurance and who are appointed by agreement between the citizens of each administrative entity, as provided for in the Convention of government. The process is continuing.

The Government of Burundi requests the international community to assist in providing this administration with the logistical means to carry out its work in order to guide the population more effectively in the direction of peace and reconciliation. A request to this effect has been prepared by the Minister of the Interior and is available.

10. Lastly, the report refers to the possibility of imposing "selective sanctions ... against individuals believed to belong to extremist groups in Burundi" (para. 27). We believe that it is difficult for the international community to have a correct understanding of the notion of extremist in the case of Burundi, a country whose social fabric has been literally torn apart since the crisis of October 1993. Moreover, measures of this kind have virtually no real, appreciable or beneficial effect on the population of Burundi. Furthermore, the hard core of extremists is relatively small compared to the multitude who want, and are working for, peace.

On the other hand it would be wise to attack the declared warmongers, who have mobilized a parallel army and who, from both outside and inside the country, are provoking attacks and deadly confrontations. We are thinking in particular of the so-called "Forces for the Defence of Democracy", extremist forces referred to in paragraph 16 of the report. It is these forces which are preventing reconciliation among the people of Burundi and depriving them of the peace and security of which they are so much in need. These warmongers are well known and they travel freely in neighbouring countries and throughout the world. They are even financed by certain Western circles and lobbies.

11. The international community should also support the efforts being made by the Government in pursuing its policy of a return to peace and security. To that end, the international community should, while condemning the warmongers, avoid making alarmist statements and resolutely strive to provide positive and reassuring encouragement.

12. The Government of Burundi greatly appreciates the role played by the United Nations during the crisis and hopes that it will continue to work to ensure that Burundi does not sink into the abyss. The Government of Burundi offers its full cooperation to the United Nations in order to prevent further conflicts.

I should be grateful if you would have the contents of this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Melchiade BUKURU
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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